

YELLOWSTONE RIVER CONSERVATION DISTRICT COUNCIL

CONSERVATION DISTRICT MEMBERS: Carbon, Custer, Dawson, Park, Prairie, Richland, Rosebud, Stillwater, Sweet Grass, Treasure, Yellowstone, McKenzie County North Dakota

Meeting Minutes – August 18, 2006 Tele-Conference Call

Members Present: Paul Gilbert, Sweet Grass CD; Phil Fox Treasure CD; Tony Barone, Richland CD; Walter Rolf, Custer CD; Kenny Nemitz, Dawson CD; Bob Hector, Yellowstone CD; Dave Schwarz, Prairie CD; Gay Easton, Yellowstone CD; Steve Story, Stillwater CD; Don Youngbauer, Rosebud CD; John Moorhouse, RAC; Luther Waterland, MACD; and Orvin Finsaas, McKenzie ND.CD.

Others Present: Robert Lubbers, YRCF; Jim Robinson, DNRC; Laurie Zeller, DNRC; and Carol Watts, Custer CD.

Chairman Paul Gilbert called the meeting to order at 1:05 pm August 18, 2006. Roll call was done by Carol announcing the county names and members responding. Other participants were added.

Paul Gilbert's first order of business was to appoint a committee to research the possibility of hiring a coordinator. Those appointed were Dave Schwarz, Walter Rolf, Don Youngbauer, Tony Barone, John Moorhouse, and Steve Story. Laurie Zeller and Warren Kellogg will serve as advisors. This committee will update the job description, discuss funding and report back to the Council in September. Paul also wants this committee to nominate someone to run for chairman and vice chairman at the September meeting. The vice chairman should be ready to assume the chairman position the following year.

Dave Schwarz reported that he had attended the listening session in Helena on August 14th. He arrived early only to find out the session would not begin until 1:00pm. He took advantage of the situation and was able to meet with the EPA representative and the USFWS for approximately 20 minutes. He gave them fact sheets on the Yellowstone River Conservation District Council and the briefing paper that was prepared for the congressional delegation.

Schwarz also attended the meeting of the Yellowstone River Forum. They are interested in river access and Schwarz said this group would probably bring their concerns to the Council at a later date.

Schwarz spoke with Paul Wilkens who is on the appropriations negotiating committee from Baucus's office in the Senate. They are currently working on the differences between the House bill and the Senate version. The YRCDC is currently listed for a million dollars in the Senate version. Schwarz stated that there had been a huge effort on the part of Conrad Burns to keep the million dollar appropriation in the Senate version of the budget. Burns will be in Miles City next Friday and Schwarz hopes to see him and thank him publicly on behalf of the Council. This was approved by consensus vote of the Council. Schwarz suggested that Council members write letters to the editors of their local newspaper and thank Burns, Baucus and Rehberg for their combined support of the study. It is important to emphasize that it is all about the river as a bipartisan point of view. Schwarz also thought the North Dakota delegation should be contacted. The YRCDC may be awarded somewhere between \$500,000.00 and \$625,000.00 in the final appropriation. The first part of September would be a good time to contact the legislators.

Jim Robinson and Dave Schwarz completed the RDGP final report. Dave has the 2006 annual report out for review.

Jim Robinson reported on the TAC meeting which was held on Wednesday the 16th of August. Greg Johnson of the COE was there to give a quick update on the hydrology and hydraulic work that the COE is doing. This work is done for the basin upstream of the Big Horn River. This means that it can be used in the hydraulic modeling work to do the floodplain delineation for Stillwater and Yellowstone counties. Greg Johnson indicated that he had gotten some funding from FEMA.

The TAC heard from DEQ with an update of where they are with water quality. They are a long ways from doing TMDL's on the Yellowstone River main stem because they are working on the methodology to use for large river systems.

Robinson reported that Susan Gilbertz presented her work on the cultural study at the TAC meeting. All the interviews have been completed. She asked if Park County should be included and whether she should put effort into getting interviews with the Northern Cheyenne Tribe. She did interview four people from the Crow reservation. Susan will be interacting with the RAC to review the interviews for clarity.

Robinson stated that he had recently submitted a grant application to the EPA for a Yellowstone River Ortho Viewer. This is a tool that will make all the historical photography that has been collected through the CES available via the internet. This grant amount is for \$75,000.00.

The wetland grant that was submitted by The Nature Conservancy was declined. Kenny Nemitz commented that he did not feel that this grant was needed. The TAC will need to rethink how they will do the vegetative part of the study.

The NRIS contract for posting information to the web page has expired with approximately \$2,500.00 left to spend. A new contract will need to be written if we are to continue to use their services. Approval by consensus was granted to do this if funding can be found.

Warren has called for a TAC meeting on September 20, 2006 in Billings.

Bob Hector said that Brent Esplin of the BOR was at the TAC meeting to give an update on the Pryor Creek project. Bob Hector had met with the BOR representative and Brent Esplin at the fish barrier. Measurements were taken to come up with the feasibility information needed. Bob Hector was also able to make arrangement with another landowner at a different barrier to get permission for access lined up. This engineering feasibility study will be paid for with DNRC one time money and BOR money.

Joan Brownell was at the TAC meeting to present her study on the historical documents. She was paid to do a pilot study to determine the utility of historical information such as surveyors' notes from the 1800s, railroad records and other data. The TAC discussed how the information could be used to support other components of the overall study such as the riparian vegetation assessment and the geomorphologic study.

The first RDGP grant has been spent. Robinson said that the second grant needs to be used in such a way that the legislature and the grant program administrators will want to give us more. We need to demonstrate results that will warrant future investment.

Robinson stated that Carol Watts would like to use part of the 319 grant money to attend the BSPPA workshop in Whitefish in October. The Council approved this by consensus vote.

The business part of the meeting was next on the agenda. The grant statement for June 30, 2006 showed that the 2006 pass through was completely spent. Carol explained the changes that were made in the grants in order to do this. An updated grant statement will be done for the September meeting.

The June meeting minutes were approved.

The agenda for the September 21st meeting will include the report from the coordinator search committee, the election of officers, and public outreach.

A tele-conference needs to be set up for the coordinator search committee, Carol will tell Walter Rolf and Kelly Gilbertson. Laurie Zeller requested that committee members be sent the current job description before the tele-conference. Paul Gilbert said that Schwarz could help with organizing that meeting.

Paul asked if Council members had been receiving reports from Schwarz and some said they had. Paul asked Carol if she was getting what she needed. Carol said it would be good to put a report with the stipend voucher. Paul asked Schwarz to include one.

A final comment came from Robert Lubbers who stated that the Yellowstone Forum appreciated the work that the Council was doing.

The meeting adjourned at 2:00 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Carol Watts